

**2011 Testimony to the Judicial Committee
An Act Concerning Discrimination HB6452**

Honorable chairs, senators and representatives, my name is Diana Lombardi and I live in Berlin. I would like to urge you to vote in favor of HB6599: An Act Concerning Discrimination.

I want to talk to you about my family values.

All my life I hid my transsexualism from my family, I was scared and frightened that I would lose them forever if they found out. However, when I transitioned they would have to know.

One day in 2004, I summoned all my courage and told my brother. I was prepared for the worst... but when I told him, he hugged me. He said that he didn't understand, but that he would love me no matter what.

Three years later, just before I transitioned I told my sister-in-law, niece, nephews, and their children. They all accepted me with open arms. I told all my cousins and they have all accepted me. In a reply to my "Coming Out" letter one cousin wrote...

"Thank you for sharing your story with us. I, in turn, shared your letter with my children who, as parents themselves, need to be reminded of the importance of accepting their children as they are. Whatever their differences may be."

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To me that is one of my family values... to love your children.

One cousin who was deeply religious I was worried about coming out to, I was afraid that she would be the one cousin who wouldn't accept me. My brother and sister-in-law accompanied me when I went to tell her. After I told her, she got up, walked across the room, hugged me and said that I was so brave. She was also the first cousin to invite me as "Diana" to a family function.

Since then I have gone to the weddings of my nephews and to the funeral of my aunt, my family has been there with me.

I am a student at UConn's School of Social Work and hopefully, I will be graduating this May with my MSW. When I first attended class, I did not know what to expect, would they welcome me or would I be shunned? My worries were for nothing, they welcomed me with open arms and over the years I have made many new friendships. I will miss them, the students, faculty and the staff when I graduate.

A loving and supporting family plays an important part in the support of a trans-person. Since coming out, I have met trans-people whose families threw them out on the street when they told their parents that they were transgender, many of them ended up working the streets. While trans-children from supporting families have fewer problems with their transitions and have

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fewer suicides. The difference between love and acceptance and that of intolerance can be the deciding factor between life and death.

This bill will not change family values, but what it will do is to give hope to those who are trying to find a job to feed their families. Hope to those who are trying to keep a roof over their family's heads. Hope that other children may have an easier time when they come out. All we ask is to have an equal chance at a job. This bill will help families by protecting their jobs and by preventing discrimination in housing, credit and public accommodations.

In closing, I would like to read a quote from George Washington that he made in 1790 in Newport, Rhode Island,

"The Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection, should demean themselves as good citizens."

Please pass HB6599: An Act Concerning Discrimination and give bigotry no sanction.

Thank you.

